

Brethren Evangelist

"I Am the Way, the Truth and the Life."—Jesus

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Editorial

Editorial Announcement

This week the editor leaves the EVANGELIST office to be absent about six weeks. During this time we expect to visit churches in Illinois, Iowa, Kansas and Nebraska. The business of the office will be in the hands of others, and so will part of the editorial work. Will those concerned please give heed to the following:

(1) Bills have been sent to all who are indebted to this office, and a prompt remittance on your part will be greatly appreciated. The business year of the Board closes the last day of July, and the new one begins August 1. It is important therefore that all accounts should be settled on or before the above date.

(2) This is a time of the year when original copy runs very low. Let pastors furnish a sermon for the EVANGELIST once a week. Surely there are as many as ten pastors who can spare one sermon each. If not a sermon, then furnish us other original copy so as to keep the paper readable during these warm days. Church news has kept up remarkably well, and we hope it may continue to do so.

The Confusion of Theology

The Christian world has been divided for centuries between several contending schools of theology, the distinctive features of which can be stated very briefly.

One great school holds that God is able to save everybody, but chooses to save only a few.

A second holds that God is *willing* to save everybody, but is *able* to save only a few.

A third holds that God is both willing and able to save everybody, and that He will actually do so if you give Him time enough.

The first clearly makes God responsible for the damnation of all who are lost, since he is able to save them, but will not.

The second only puts this responsibility a little farther back in point of time, by representing God as creating a race, of whom countless multitudes would certainly be lost,—and He knew they would be lost,—without his being at all able to prevent it. Since He was not compelled to create such a race, the act of creation in this case fixes the responsibility.

Now it is a fact that the scholarship of the world has been, and is at this writing, about equally divided between these several schools of theology, and if the learned are thus divided and confused, what chance is there for the unlearned,

the great multitude who are not scholars, who are not able to reason out these difficult problems?

The spectacle of these contending theologies and this divided scholarship of the world is a most conclusive argument against the theologies themselves, without any reference whatever to their respective merits.

When we look at them closely, we find that the bone of contention in every case is a question which is entirely outside of our intellectual province. It is a question which deals with the divine prerogative alone, about which we are incapable of knowing everything, and which in plain terms is none of our business.

If salvation depended upon a clear understanding of the physical, intellectual, moral and spiritual laws of the universe, who could be saved? If salvation depended only upon our knowing how a blade of grass grows, who could be saved? It doesn't depend upon any of these things, and much less does it depend upon our understanding the principles and purposes of the divine government.

The fog clears away the moment we step over to the human side of salvation. For instance everybody agrees, and the simplest can understand, that personal salvation simply means the difference between a good man and a bad man. The simplest are able to recognize a good man and a bad man. They know the brand. They know what makes the one good and the other bad. They comprehend that to be a Christian means purity, honesty, truth, and love, as love is manifested in service, in short, to be like Christ. The most unlearned can comprehend Christ now, as well and as easily, as they did when He was among them on the earth in visible bodily presence. They know what it is to put faith and trust in a good man, and the step from this idea to faith in Christ is a short and easy one.

All that we need to understand of the philosophy of salvation is *faith* and *holiness*. Holiness is simply obedience writ large, and we ought to understand once for all, that the obedience which falls short of holiness is neither obedience nor holiness.

If the church had always confined itself to the human side of the plan of salvation, and had never dabbled in the divine side, there would never have been the confusion and division which has weakened and disgraced it.

But men have always sought escape from the stringent obligations of personal holiness, and one of their favorite substitutes has been, and is, to become a zealot instead of a Christian.

To become like Christ means a cross. To be a zealot only requires a good pair of lungs, and plenty of condemnation for everybody who doesn't agree with you.